

**PRESS CONFERENCE:**

**Major General James Dubik  
Iraq Minister of Defense Abu Qadir  
Iraq Minister of Interior Jawad Bulani**

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**ALEXANDRA ZAVIS FROM THE L.A. TIMES**

**BRAD BROOKS FROM THE AP**

**DIAA HADID FROM THE AP**

**STEVEN FARRELL FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES**

**REPORTERS 1-7**

**\*REP1 = REPORTER 1**

**\*INT = INTERPRETER**

**MG DUBIK:** Thank you for taking time today to be with us to talk about some important issues from both of my esteemed colleagues, the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior. Today, the Minister of Defense, Minister Abu Qadir, and the Minister of Interior, Minister Bulani, and I will provide an update on the progress and the collaborative efforts of their respective ministries. All of us are moving forward to make Iraq safer, more secure place for all citizens of Iraq. Both ministries have committed countless hours of hard work, sacrifices of lives, and also hard work to equip, train, and field police and military forces. The Multi-national Security Transition Command-Iraq is proud to continue to be a partner with both ministries and the people of Iraq as the Government of Iraq prepares to assume a larger and more prominent role in security. I'm honored to turn over the remainder of the time of this press conference to my two colleagues and friends, the Ministers of Defense and Interior. Shukran.

**MOD QADIR:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** Happy Eid everyone, and welcome. Our presence today makes us ready to answer any kind of question in any field of the development of our abilities and the different military units that we deal with. In addition to the other operations that we conduct, I

welcome you and we are ready to answer any kind of question that you have.

**MOI BULANI:** Good morning everyone. Happy Eid for all. And on the occasion al-Eid that we're witnessing. Also on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year. All these occasions coincide so that we present all the good wishes to the people of Iraq and wish that the language of peace and security will be the one that will prevail in the world. And peace is actually what the Iraqi people deserve after all the ages of suffering. Thank you for your presence, and I hope we will answer all the questions in any field that you would like to ask. Thank you.

**REP1:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** Question to the Minister of Defense. From the press agency. How would you view the situation of the security transition, especially since the Iraqi Government said that the multi-national forces will remain for another one year? Will you be able to rehab all the Iraqi Security Forces within one year? And what about handing over the security file in Babil? Why it has been delayed? Thank you.

**MOD QADIR:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** As a security minister, this is a technical issue completely, and it

has to do with the development of the military abilities of the forces. We have been working, not for now, but for a long time, to develop the abilities of the forces. And the more we develop the forces, whether in the Interior or Defense, the more we start taking over the security issue in different places. As for Babil province, the security issue in Babil province and taking over the security issues follows certain standards and procedures. And it is followed and supervised by the national security in the province itself. And the province itself takes the decision to hand over the security situation.

**ZAVIS:** Alexandra Zavis from the Los Angeles Times. This is a question for both of the Ministers. How many of the so-called Concerned Local Citizens do you think you will be able to incorporate into your respective security forces? What have been the delays doing that? What have been the challenges that you've encountered? And what will happen to the rest?

**MOD QADIR:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** The policy of the government in bringing the people, the Awakening groups and the CLCs, particularly in areas that witnessed danger of al-Qaida and the threat of al-Qaida, in my assessment, the policy of the government and the policy of the

multi-national forces is matched in a way that we can make use of those people so that we can combine them into the security forces so that they can provide security in those places. And this happened for many reasons, and the government and the Iraqi Security Forces and the multi-national forces, as I said, took these issues seriously. The number...I don't have an exact number for you, but they are around 70,000 to 80,000. And this depends on the situation and the places that they're working, and of course the security development in that place and also the plan of the government of how to make use of 20% of those groups, CLCs, and the security services. And also the government will have a special schedule to bring them to other kinds of duties so that they will be part of the development that Iraq witnesses. So, in my assessment, it's an effort by all the ministries of Iraq so that they can bring all those volunteers. And this experiment has proved many positive results in dealing with the threatening situation in those places. And I consider that it's a really good achievement and one of the good positive signs that we witnessed on the security side. And this case of bringing the volunteers is still open, and we still have other economical projects for those people so that we can bring most of the people to other parts or aspects in the community. As for the Minister of Defense, the Awakening groups are very important, and we work with them, of course, with coordination of Ministry of Interior, particularly in

western Iraq and Anbar province. The Awakening for the Iraqi Army is based on choosing who's qualified for being a soldier. This is one thing. An Awakening, in general, we reject that the Awakening groups turn into a military organization. We have only two unified military organizations, that is the Interior and the Defense. We reject that there will be any kind of third unity. The Awakenings actually are part of us, and they work under the national unity government and the Iraqi national unity government with the multi-national forces to care for those groups and provide the financing to them so that those people in the Awakening groups could join the Iraqi Security Forces in the Ministry of Interior and Defense according to their own standards and disciplines. And in case that there are some people who do not meet the needs and qualifications, they will be rejected. But everyone should know that there will not be a third organization or a third power. There's only the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense.

**REP2:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** I have two questions to the Minister of Defense. The first is we know that the American forces said that they will stop financing the Awakening groups, and the American Army provides \$300 as a monthly salary. So as an Iraqi Government, have you allocated a budget for those groups in 2008? And how much will the

Awakening groups be given according to the budget in 2008? This is the first question. The second question about the situation in southern Iraq, and according to the politicians is actually deteriorating. We have explosions in Amarah, Diwaniyah, and Basra, so have you ever talked about an interference from Iran in the southern provinces?

**MOD QADIR:** As far as the first question, the Iraqi Government thought with the multi-national forces and set a budget for the Awakening groups. And we have a timing to set that. We can't give details about how much we will be giving the Awakening groups. The money will be enough for those groups. The second question. There are many interferences, whether from Iran or from any other country, whether they were from weapons or when it comes also to organized crime and smuggling across the border. The southern of Iraq and the incidents that took place are controlled and limited, and they're very small. Our stance in the south is much better, and we are making a great development in the south. And as a Minister of Defense and Interior, the first quarter of 2008 will witness a great development in the abilities in the southern provinces, whether in the military or any other aspect. And we will have much more control in the southern provinces so that we can replace the multi-national forces with a much more ability so that we can control and eliminate all

kinds of terrorism and organized crime.

**BROOKS:** Brad Brooks with the Associated Press. This is a question for either of the ministers. And that is, to what degree do you think that the CLCs or the Awakening councils can be used as a means of bringing more Sunnis into the political process? Is that in the thought of the government at all?

**MOI BULANI:** In my assessment, let's go back in history and how this Awakening actually happened in the past. It started in Anbar province, and the al-Qaida terrorists were actually in this great province, so the tribal leaders and the sons of Anbar stood against those movements. The experiment was enhanced and also reapplied in other places and the people in this area rejected the al-Qaida thoughts and ideology. That's why they made the Awakening groups, because al-Qaida cannot provide a good environment for itself, so al-Qaida was targeted and defeated in those places. And now there are small resistance of al-Qaida and that is being pursued by the Iraqi Forces and MNF and also by members in the Awakening groups. The political side helps, in my assessment. Of course, the more the security situation improves in Iraq, this will have or will save no space for any person to follow up with the political process. I think that the improved security situation will provide a good

environment for the political aspects and also I say, yes, the Awakening groups improve the security situation in many of the places in Iraq. As far as I'm concerned, the Sunni and the Awakening groups is a reaction to the ideology that the al-Qaida adopted in Iraq. And al-Qaida tried to prevent the Sunnis from entering the political process. That was in the past. The reaction to that was there was an uprising by the Sunnis, and this was presented by the Awakening groups by the tribes and the tribe leaders. Now when al-Qaida is defeated, all the Sunnis are heading to the political process and to be part of the political process, and they will have a much bigger role in the political process. And they will have excellent entities that will serve the political process in Iraq. And we will witness a good change in the coming elections, because there is nothing preventing them or no one preventing them from going and taking part in the political process like before so that they can create a new future and a promising future for Iraq.

**HADID:**

Diaa Hadid from the Associated Press. For the Minister of Interior and Defense please. So can you please clarify whether there's a deadline for absorbing the Awakening committees into the Defense and Interior Ministries? Can you please clarify what will happen to those do not enter? And are you concerned that if the tribal groups don't get the numbers that they want into the Ministries of Interior

and Defense that effectively they'll turn their guns back on to other local Iraqi populations?

**MOI BULANI:** I think the Ministry of Interior has started in accepting some of the members in the CLC and the Awakening through some temporary contracts that are between the Ministry of Interior and the Awakening groups in Baghdad and also in some places in Diyala province. The Ministry of Interior started to admit some of those, and we have lists of over 7,000 members from those groups. A few days ago, we signed a contract for another 3,000 members, and also we're waiting for other lists of members so that...or actually they're waiting for the biometric procedures, and so the schedule is ongoing so that we can bring those people. And the ability that allows the ministry so that we can end this mission in the coming few months. And in my assessment that the government, the Iraqi Government, is committed to the Awakening groups and feels that this is a really positive thing. And it's an important thing as well. And bringing them also to the permanent job, or providing them with permanent jobs, not just temporary ones, in the Iraqi institutes. And this also will be under some training. And this is what the specialists in the Ministry of Interior are doing so that they will be trained to be qualified to carry out their missions in the proper way. As I said, this experiment that the Iraqi Government took seriously, and the

Iraqi Government allocated over 150 billion Iraqi dinars for those experiments and joining them to the forces. So, the future will tell that the good things that actually will come out from this experiment. Of course, we know that there could be some negative aspects, but the government was able to face these challenges. The Ministry of Interior faced and tackled many of the negative aspects and we were able to fire so many people from the ministry who were not loyal. So, anyone who is trying to join the Ministry of Interior should abide by the law and should know that no one is above the law. So the person that we hire or we recruit so that they can work in the Ministry of Interior, we can also deal with them in a way that probably we can fire him in case he didn't show any allegiance to the government itself. So there are certain plans, certain procedures. So we're very careful so that the political aspect will not be influenced this process itself. And there is no mutiny about those people so that in case they violated the law or caused any kind of problem.

**HADID:**

We're still talking about tens of thousands of people who at the moment have sort of a temporary job and will need to be found some kind of alternative work because they won't be incorporated into the security forces. Could you give us a few more details about what kind of jobs, specifically, you have in mind for them? And

how do you convince somebody who's used to carrying a gun to fix a road, for example?

**MOI BULANI:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** Well, I've just talked about the government and the project that the government has and the policy of the government in providing job opportunities. And let's talk about the Iraqi constitution that actually he adopted that every single Iraqi citizen should have a job. And this is the job of the government to provide any Iraqi citizen with a job. And it's a responsibility for the Iraqi Government in making a certain program, because some of those will join the Iraqi forces and the police and Iraqi Army and also in the FPS, in the institute so that they could provide security to those institutes and also provide protection for the infrastructure. The other part of the people will be included in a program that the institutes will work on through providing small loans and funds so that they can start working on productive projects that will have benefit on the community. And the fiscal will be coordinated with the Ministry of Social Work, and they will also carry out some training for those people. So I think the jobs that, or in case the Ministries were not able to provide jobs for those people for the tribes in certain places, there should be other job opportunities so that we can start working on projects and bringing those people to work to the community and

benefit the community itself. And of course, will be part of the economical development in the government. And the Iraqi Government is able to face these challenges.

**REP3:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** Question to the two Ministers. How would you evaluate the security situation now in Baghdad and the provinces? And how would you describe the reduction of the attacks and car bombs and IEDs? Could you give us a comparison of the attacks between last year and this year?

**MOD QADIR:** As far as the security situation is concerned, I have some figures with me. I would have told you that the security situation in all the provinces in Iraq, and particularly in the capital, reached a very low level, as far as the terrorist activities are concerned. Except in the provinces of Ninawa and Diyala, we have also some figures that show the terrorist attacks, even in Diyala province, the terrorist activities that go over there has a very weak quality and a very limited in action. In Diyala during the past few months due to the coordination between the two ministries and the multi-national forces, we were able to lower the terrorism by half, or by 50%, in that state. In Ninawa province, we weren't able to lower the terrorist attacks. We were able to lower it by just 30%, and we are

working on it in a very good coordinated way so that the reduction of the terrorist attacks could be much lower than in Baghdad or Diyala because each province influences the other. Diyala influenced Baghdad, and vice-versa. So, we're working on this method. We're also working on fighting methods and machines of detecting explosives. We're also working on giving more training to the Iraqi Security Forces in the streets. And there is also the cooperation between the Iraqi citizens and the security forces. This also contributed in reducing the car bombs and IEDs. And also, in the coming few months, we hope that everything will be much lower in the provinces.

**MOI BULANI:** I'd like to shed some light for the improvement that happened all over Iraq. Baghdad was one of the threatening places that reached to around 58%. Baghdad was the first and the biggest challenge due to the terrorist activities that witnesses and are being conducted by the organized crimes. And the thing that has been achieved by Operation Fardh al-Qanoon during the operations that the Ministries of Interior and Defense in Baghdad, I think that all this made the situation much better and it did influence the security in other places in Iraq. And also what happened in Anbar is also a good contributor to that, because Anbar province was one of the places that we can say that witnessed a great security improvement. And

the other provinces in the southern Iraq that witnessed the good security improvement that the Minister of Defense said, we have Mosul, Salahadeen and Diyala provinces. And despite the operations that the two ministries conduct with the multi-national forces in those provinces and the security improvement in those places I think that the coming fight with the terrorists and the al-Qaida will be in the north and will be another in Baghdad. And also we will have other operations to pursue the al-Qaida and other organizations or insurgencies. So, in general, the security situation is being improved and those who are actually being detained and captured is a good indication and gives a good indication. And all the weapon caches and al-Qaida members and also the media networks of al-Qaida that are being captured and destroyed and eliminated, and also the training camps of those al-Qaida, all this gives us a good indication to this security improvement. Also another indication was finding factories for IEDs and car bombs. Over 60 factories have been found, so all those are actually good achievements of the Iraqi Security Forces, and a good indication for the improved security in the country.

**FARRELL:** Steven Farrell from the New York Times. We hear a lot about Baghdad and what's happened there. Could you, possibly both ministers, give us a little bit more detail on how exactly you intend

to tackle the problems in other parts of the country, such as, as you mentioned, the northern provinces? With the surge now at its heightened numbers declining there, what is going to be the strategy for dealing with al-Qaida and terrorism in the rest of the country?

**MOI BULANI:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** This is actually a technical thing, and we cannot talk about this in the media. We make plans, and we provide maneuvering operations that will have a great influence on the enemy and also we are coordinating and working closely with the multi-national forces so that we can provide operations that will provide security that are similar to what happened in Baghdad.

**REP4:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** Question to the Minister of Interior. There are some reports by the media that the Secretary of Izat Aduri was captured. Is that true?

**MOI BULANI:** These are one of the special duties that we announced previously, and I think that these members that are connected with Izat Aduri and Yunis Ahmad, they have been monitored closely. And the investigation is still on, and the Iraqi security services are working closely and also in coordination with the multi-national forces regarding this.

**REP5:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** Question for the Minister of Interior. There are some reports saying that the Ministry of Interior will pull the special guards from the Parliament representatives. Is that true? Do you have any data to confirm this?

**MOI BULANI:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** This is a decision from the Council of Ministers, and it was adopted by the last cabinet meeting. And everything that needs organization and planning should follow some certain procedures. The institutes, for example, it is now high time so that we can organize the efforts. And everyone should be responsible for...we are now heading to construct the institutes that could provide good financing to the projects, and I think that in the coming few days, or the future, there will be a plan or a schedule to organize the work of the guards. So as soon as the security situation is improved, the bodyguards will also be...the work of the bodyguards will be lessened so that there work will be organized and coordinated with special institutes. And that is through their training and their work. And we're also planning to make a new directory in the Ministry of Interior that will provide security to the Parliament members and the figures of the Iraqi Government. And this is through a policy. And in my assessment this will be applied in 2008. We're not going to pull the

bodyguards—they will be there. But as the Minister said, their work will be organized, and the budget that will be provided for this will not be from the budgets of the Ministry of Interior and Defense, but will be from the budget of the Council of Representatives, because they're protecting them.

**REP6:** Asking question in Arabic.

**INT:** Some of the people linked the security situation and the improvement of the security situation with the freezing of JAM. Would you ask Muqtada al-Sadr to renew his freezing for JAM?

**MOI BULANI:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** At first, we cannot talk on behalf of Muqtada al-Sadr and the freezing resolution. In my assessment, it's a good decision and it did contribute a lot in reducing the violence. And also, it contributed in improving the situation. And the Iraqi Government expressed and said that many times that it's a good decision and it's a good patriotic decision, because it provides security to the people and the Iraqis due to all the confusion that is going on. And I believe that this is a good decision, and we hope that this decision will be extended because the security situation has improved, and the Iraqi Security Forces are ready to face any kind of security threat. So the one who's responsible for the security in Iraq will be

those in the Interior and Defense because those are authorized in carrying weapons to provide security for the people. Extending the freezing...we actually support any kind of decision that will enhance the security situation, and will also uncover the organized crimes and those groups. As for are we going to ask those people? We are security ministers. Our job is to find terrorism, there are some other political officials. They have the role in asking those people to renew the freezing.

**REP7:**

I have two more questions. One was a follow up. For the Minister of Defense, why, in your opinion do you think that Diyala and Ninawa in particular have been such persistent problems? What is it that's happening in those provinces that's different from the others? And then for the Minister of Interior, the chart highlights a lot of the efforts that have been made within the national police of late. And yet, a few months ago there was an independent US assessment that actually recommended dismantling the force altogether. I was wondering what your reaction was to that report and your assessment of how they're doing.

**MOD QADIR:**

Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:**

As far as the two provinces, like Ninawa and Diyala, those two provinces and the population of those two provinces are actually

versatile. We have people from many different sectarian backgrounds. Diyala province has a great influence in Baghdad. When operations started in Baghdad, most of the terrorism moved from Baghdad and Anbar province, they moved to Diyala. Anbar was divided to two people. Some moved to Salah ad Din, and some went to Diyala. There's a lot of terrorism that went to Diyala. Diyala as a geography we have rivers and farms and many other places, and it became a good place for terrorism, and there are certain places that terrorism took a safe haven. The forces that were in Diyala were limited. What we did is we organized operations and the forces in Diyala so that we now have a joint commanding operation from the Ministry of Interior of Defense and the MNF. But still we need work so that we can add more momentum for this work and the operations that are being conducted to eliminate all al-Qaida there. In Ninawa province, it's a vast and a large area, and we know that there is infiltration from the neighboring countries, particularly from Syria. So far, we have infiltration from Syria, but much less than before. And the sectarian and ethnic background is the problem in that province. That's why we need to unite all the efforts and the leadership and enhance the units at work in that province so that we can eliminate the terrorist attacks and stop these attacks. And we are also coordinating and planning in that.

**MOI BULANI:** Speaking in Arabic.

**INT:** As far as my assessment for the national police, as a Minister of Interior, I deal with all the notes that we receive about, or notes that explain the work of the Ministry of Interior and the missions of the Ministry of Interior, the formations and the units in the Ministry. I think that there are some good aspects that has been achieved, and good points that has been achieved in this time. And the experts also said that. We hear reports that have good aspects and some other reports that give you some...or actually talk about the bad side only. We deal with those two sides in a good way. And any kind of report that we receive, we try to tackle it and investigate these reports. And whether these negative aspects that have been mentioned in the reports actually exist or not. And we will not allow mistakes that took place in the past years to happen again, and the negative aspects also. And in my assessment that the national police, this really good institute, and after being trained in Numaniyah Camp and after conducting many missions in the security aspect in several places and the clearing operations that have been conducted by those national police and the changes also in the leadership in the national police and the training. So, all this makes the national police ready to receive more volunteers from Anbar province, Kirkuk, Mosul, and we have a plan to enlarge the institute of national police so that they can receive more people

from different places in Iraq, particularly in areas that were controlled by al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. I think the plans for the national police are being based on a good foundation by the government, and the last training program we have by the NATO and the Carabinieri police, this will continue for two years. And I think this will add more abilities and will increase the capacity of the national police inside the Ministry of Interior in fighting terrorism, and also in fighting corruption and sectarianism. We are trying to make use of any kind of method that we have so that we can eliminate all the obstacles that face the Ministry. The Ministry of Interior is an Iraqi ministry, and it has many duties and is actually now concerned with many cases and files with the Ministry of Defense, and work in a coordinated way with the Ministry of Defense and was able to face the terrorism and offer so many sacrifices. We suffered over 18,000 casualties in different operations. And we also participated with the multi-national forces in many places, in operations and in fighting terrorism.

**MG DUBIK:**

I'd like to thank you for your questions this morning. The progress and security certainly has been significant over the last few months for many reasons, one of which is the great cooperation between the forces of both the Ministries of Defense and Interior. And while we are all applauding the improvements of security, we're also very

much aware of the work that still has to be done. The enemies of peace and security and democracy are still active and still capable. So, the work of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense's forces will be asked to do even more. Thank you very much. I appreciate your questions.